

City of Laramie

Planning Division
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MEMORANDUM

Date: September 12, 2016
To: Planning Commission
From: Charles Bloom, AICP, Principal Planner
Subject: Renaming of Ivinson Street to Ivinson Avenue

Recommended Motion:

Move to recommend that the City Council **approve** the request to rename Ivinson Street to Ivinson Avenue.

Background:

Kim Viner, Historian for the Laramie Plains Museum, has made a request to rename Ivinson Street to Ivinson Avenue. On August 9, 2016 Mr. Viner submitted to the City a petition to the City signed by a majority of the property owners adjacent to Ivinson Street requesting the name be changed to Ivinson Avenue meeting the requirements of LMC Chapter 2.38. Presently the City recognizes the street as Ivinson Street.

History:

According to Kim Viner, discussion began on renaming Thornburgh Street to Ivinson Avenue in 1921. These finally gathered traction in 1928 when A. C. Jones, Vice President of First Interstate Bank, began to gather signatures to rename the Street to Ivinson Avenue. According to Viner, on January 21, 1928 an Ordinance was signed officially changing the street name to Ivinson Avenue shortly before Edward Ivinson passed away.

In recent decade street signs were changed stating a name of Ivinson Street. Mr. Viner and staff could not find an information in City or County records indicating that it had been to Ivinson Street. Over the last year Mr. Viner has been working with staff in trying to determine when and how Ivinson Street became labeled as Ivinson Street.

How did it Change?

The short answer is "on accident." Laramie Municipal Code § 12.12.010 "Street names" states that the streets of the city shall be designated and known by the names shown on the "zoning district map of the city of Laramie." Staff has narrowed down the date to the mid-1980s when the City Engineering Department was responsible for maintain the Official Zoning Map of the City. During that time the street was accidentally labeled as Ivinson Street on the map that was prepared in AutoCAD. Since the zoning map officially designates street names, the street has since been legally named Ivinson Street.

Cost:

Public Works Staff estimate that renaming of the street back to its correct name Ivinson Avenue will cost the City approximately \$2,500 in materials and labor. This includes the cost to manufacture new signs and staff time to install the new signage.

Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law:

Findings of Fact:

- A majority of property owners abutting the street have signed the petition

Conclusions of Law:

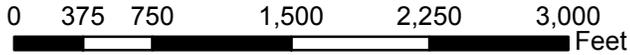
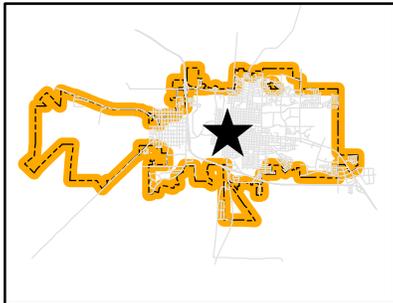
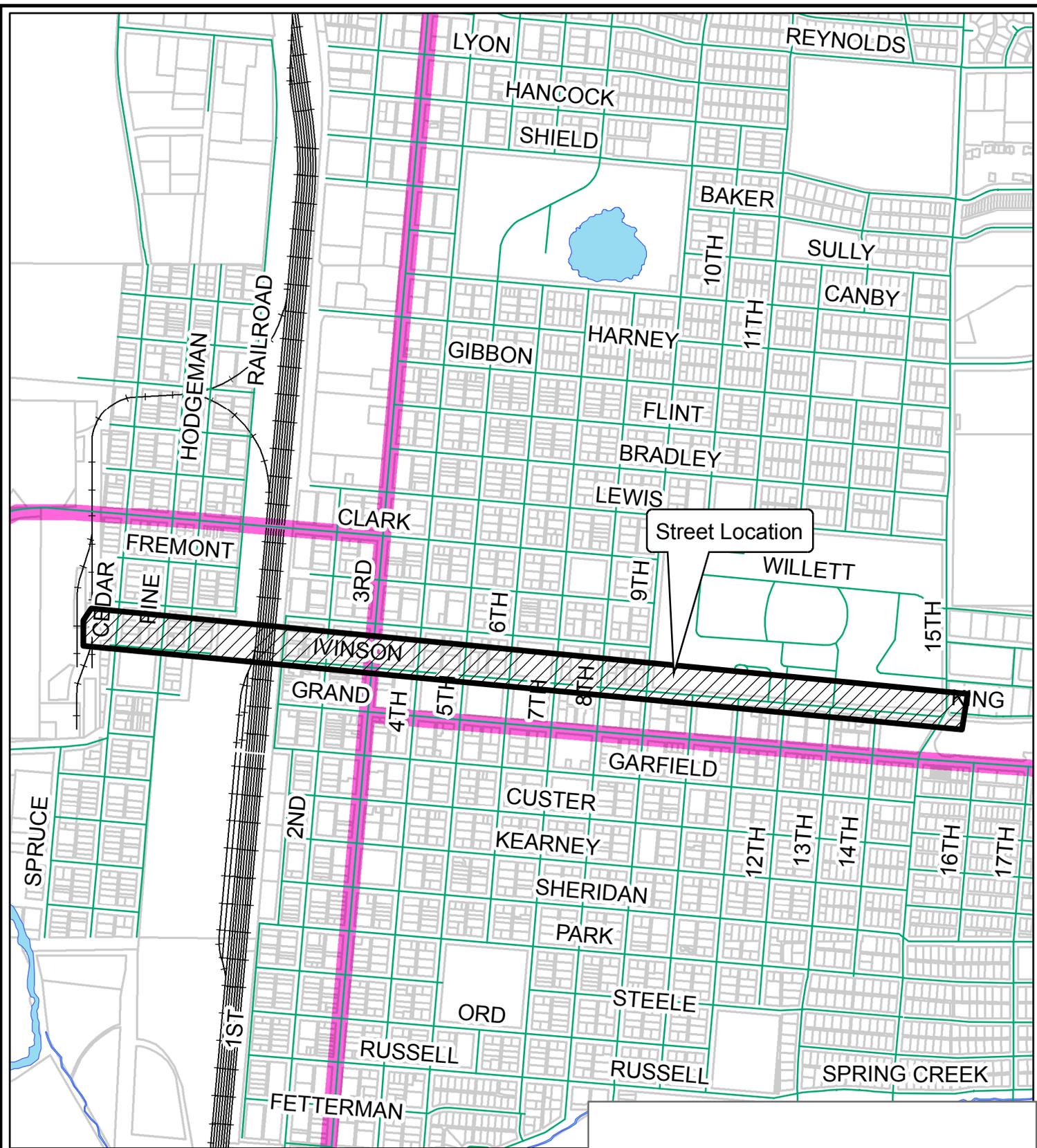
- The applicant is proceeding in accordance with the requirements of LMC 2.38.
- The redesignation of the following dedicated rights-of-way names will not abridge or destroy any of the rights and privileges of other proprietors in said plat,
- The redesignation is in the best interest of the City of Laramie, Wyoming.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission **approve** the request to rename Ivinson Street to Ivinson Avenue.

Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Request Letter and Supporting Information



Redesignation to Ivinson Avenue



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IVINSON STREET OR IVINSON AVENUE?

Over the next two years the city of Laramie will reconstruct part of the street that runs through the heart of historical Laramie. It passes Laramie's oldest banking establishment, St. Matthew's Cathedral, city hall, the county courthouse, the Laramie Plains Museum and the University of Wyoming. The question arises, is it Ivinson Street or Ivinson Avenue?

After Grenville Dodge, chief civil engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad, laid out the city in July 1867, the streets in the town were given very simple names. Streets running north and south were numbered and streets running east and west were given letters for names. From Center Street they were South A, North A etc.

No changes were made until the University of Wyoming came along in 1886. Center Street was renamed University Avenue. In 1889 the remaining east-west streets were given the names that they bear today, with one exception.

That exception is the street that was renamed in 1889 from South A to Thornburgh Street (often misspelled Thornburg). It had been named for Major Thomas Thornburgh who was a unit commander at Fort Steele and was killed in a skirmish with the Ute tribe in 1879 in Colorado.

As early as 1921 it was suggested that the street be renamed to honor Laramie banker and philanthropist, Edward Ivinson. Ivinson had given money to the county to build a modern hospital, deeded his mansion to the Episcopal Church for use as a girls boarding school and donated the money to finish St Matthew's Cathedral.

Opposition arose from an unlikely source, Ivinson's neighbor Melville C. Brown. Brown lived on Thornburgh Street, opposite the Ivinson Mansion block. He was a longtime friend of the Ivinson family but was reported by the Laramie Republican newspaper as being opposed to the change. Brown stated that "General Thornburg" deserved the honor because of his long history in the state. Notably, Brown got Thornburgh's name, rank and importance to Wyoming wrong.

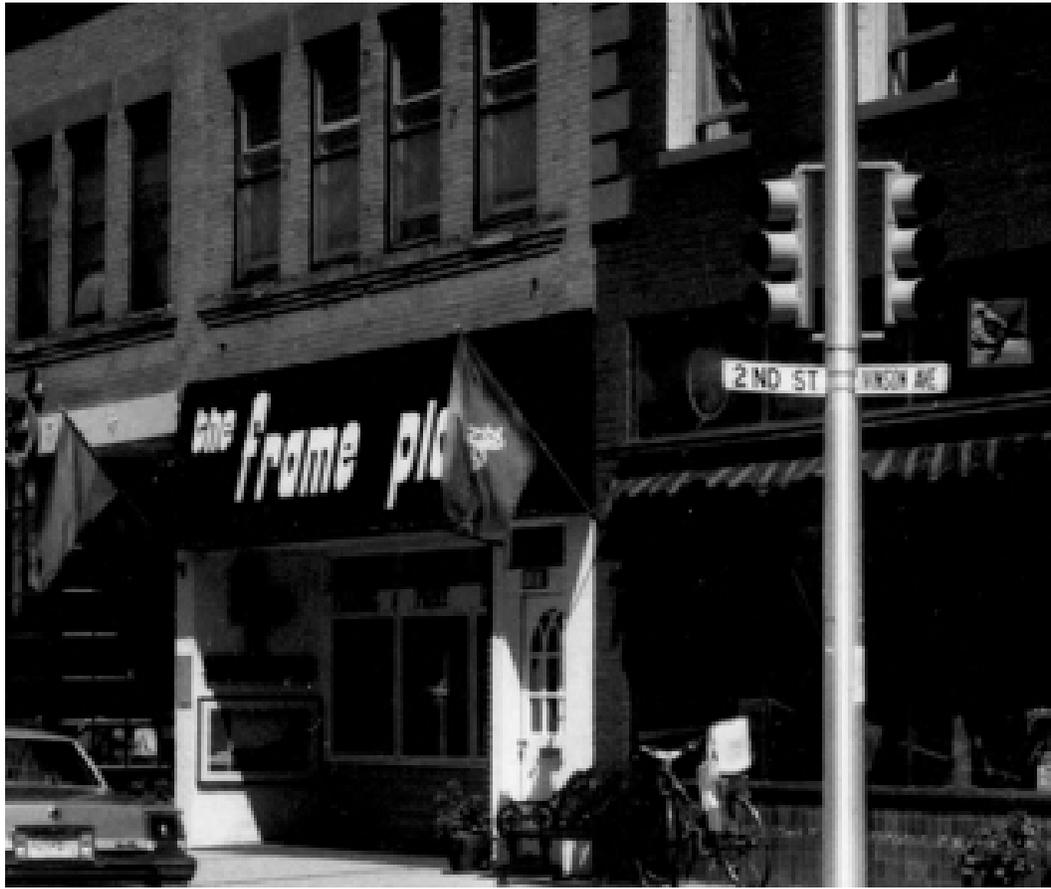
More likely Brown opposed the move because for nearly a decade he tried to get Ivinson to enter into a real estate deal that Brown felt would make him a lot of money. Ivinson did not sell, rather he gave the property to the local orphanage.

The 1921 attempt did not bear fruit, but in 1928, A. C. Jones, vice president of the First National Bank, tried again. Jones collected signatures from everyone who lived on the street and supported the change to Ivinson Avenue. He presented them to the city council. Local history says the only person who would not sign was M. C. Brown.

Despite Brown's opposition, Mayor Stephen Downey signed a city ordinance on 21 January, 1928 changing the name of the street to Ivinson Avenue. Ivinson died 10 weeks later.

But today the street signs read "Ivinson Street." How did the change come about? It seems that no one really knows. Maps produced by the Wyoming Highway Department (1977) the Laramie City Engineer (1982), and the University of Wyoming Architect (1983) all clearly label the street "Ivinson Avenue." Additionally, a photo taken of the corner of Second and Ivinson in 1982 shows a street sign titled "Ivinson Ave."

There are no city records showing that a name change to Ivinson Street was mandated by the city council. Consultations with the city planner yielded no existing records explaining the change. So we are left with the question unanswered. However, available evidence indicates that the name of the street should be Ivinson Avenue not Ivinson Street. Perhaps the reconstruction project would be a good time to change it back.



Paula:

Here is the follow-up pertaining to our discussion about Ivinson Avenue (or Street). Current city street signs show Ivinson Street. The story of why they should show Ivinson Avenue follows (some of this is taken from an article I wrote for the *Boomerang* which was published last month).

When the city was originally platted, the east-west streets were not given names; they were designated by letters. The middle street of the town was Center (some maps spelled it Centre) and south of there was South A, north was North A etc. Center was changed to University Avenue shortly after the U.W. was founded in 1886. On February 19, 1889, the editors at the *Boomerang* stated that the original 1868 east – west street names of A, B, C etc. and the north – south numbered streets were not becoming of a modern metropolis in the late 1800's. So, on that day the paper suggested an update was necessary.

THE STREET NAMES.	
The New Nomenclature by Which the East and West Streets are Now Designated – A Suggestion.	
One of the last and best acts of the late city administration was the changing of the names of those streets which run east and west. The streets now bear appropriate names and the system is one that the citizens of Laramie can easily familiarize themselves with. The only east and west street the name of which was not changed is University avenue. Running south from that thoroughfare the streets are now known as follows:	
NEW NAME.	OLD NAME.
Thornburgh	South A
Grand Avenue	South B
Garfield	South C
Custer	South D
Kearney	South E
Sheridan	South F
Park Avenue	South G
Steele	South H
Ord	South I
Russell	South J
Fetterman	South K
Sanders	South L
Palmer	South M
Mizner	South N
North of University avenue the streets are as follows:	
NEW NAME.	OLD NAME.
Fremont	North A
Clarke	North B
Lewis	North C
Bradley	North D
Flint	North E
Gibbon	North F
Harney	North G
Canby	North H
Sully	North I
Baker	North J
Shields	North K
Hancock	North L
Lyon	North M
Reynolds	North N
Curtis	North O
Mitchell	North P

The paper proposed that the streets should be renamed for early settlers or well-known locations. Names such as Trabing, Hutton, Holliday and Fillmore and famous sites such as Yellowstone were initially suggested.

Within a week, however, the *Boomerang* published another article that offered a different suggestion. This one came from local businessman W.H. Root. He suggested to the paper that the streets be named after “well known military officers who have served in this vicinity.” The *Boomerang’s* suggestion, with Root’s modification, took hold and soon the Laramie city council appointed a three person committee to study the proposal.

On March 15, 1889, they reported to the council a list of names that should be considered and the recommendation that the numbered streets not be changed. For the east – west streets they chose mostly military officers and some pioneers. Over the next week, the list was changed. The proposed Bonneville Street was changed to Grand Avenue and proposed Bridger Street was changed to Sheridan Street. On 21 March the *Boomerang* listed the names for all the streets that were to be voted upon by the city council.

The list was adopted by city ordinance on May 8, 1889, and the formal list published by the paper on May 14 (shown left). The paper praised the actions of the council noting it was one of the last acts of the outgoing administration following the election of new council members on April 2, 1889 (who took office in June).

There was confusion over the changes. In early June, new mayor Augustus Trabing asked at a council meeting if the change had been approved. He said that several local residents were not sure of the name of the street in front of their houses. Councilman Hicks assured the mayor that the changes were official and

lamented that people would know that if they simply read the paper. To rectify the situation, H. D. Beemer was hired to paint street signs that were placed where the newly named streets intersected Second Street.

The new street names north of University to Mitchell have remained the same as they were adopted in 1889. Two changes happened south of University. Mizner Street was never built and the name not used. Thornburgh would eventually be renamed.

Thornburgh was used for several years after 1889. An 1894 map online at the state archives shows the route as “Thornburgh St” in original typeset (not added later). That verified the 1889 change from South A.¹

Thornburgh was an interesting selection. He was an Army officer who had been commander of Fort Steele and was killed in a skirmish with Ute Indians in Colorado in 1879. Oddly, he had nothing really to do with Laramie and he was buried in Omaha, Nebraska, and was reburied in Arlington National Cemetery at a later date! Why the citizens of Laramie decided to name a street after him was strange.

The street (often misspelled Thornburg in the papers) retained the name until 1928. Just after the New Year, A.C. Jones, the vice president of the First National Bank and a longtime friend of Edward Ivinson, circulated a petition asking citizens of Thornburgh Street to support his call to the city council to rename the thoroughfare “Ivinson Avenue.” Local newspapers reported on 4 January 1928 that out of 40 property owners on the street only three or four did not sign the petition (legend has it that prominent resident Melville C Brown would not sign – he lived across the street from the Ivinson mansion). The paper also reported that the city council voted five to zero on the 3rd to direct the city attorney to draft an ordinance to change the name of Thornburgh Street to Ivinson Avenue.

On the 18th, papers reported that the city council passed the ordinance renaming the street Ivinson Avenue. Mayor Downey was out of the city on that day but signed the ordinance on 21 January 1928. The paper put it this way:

Mayor S.C. Downey, who returned last night from Denver, today signed the ordinance, passed unanimously by the city council Tuesday, in his absence, changing in the name of Thornburg (sic) street (sic) to Ivinson avenue (sic).....The ordinance changing the name of the street to Ivinson avenue (sic) is in honor of Edward Ivinson the oldest citizen of Laramie and its first banker. For a long time he was president of the First National Bank.

So, as of that date the official name was Ivinson Avenue.

Because street signs show “Ivinson Street” and the evidence seemed to indicate “Ivinson Avenue,” I called the Albany County Geographical Information Systems team and asked them what they used to denote the street. They replied (and their online maps state), Ivinson Avenue.² Then I called the city manager’s office and asked what they called the street (mentioning that there may be a discrepancy). They directed me to the city street department. They had access to an 1885 map done up by the (then) city engineer (also online at the state archives), that showed BOTH “S A” and Ivinson St. for the same street but in different fonts. This obviously meant that someone had gone back and added “Ivinson St” to the original map. So that was not much help, but may explain where the confusion originated.

¹ It can be seen at <http://wyoarchives.state.wy.us/Archives/Maps.aspx> as can the 1884 map and 1940 map referenced below.

² Their maps can be seen at <http://www.co.albany.wy.us/gis.aspx>

They then directed me to the City Planner's office. I talked to both the planners in the office on that day and subsequently exchanged several emails with Mr. Bloom. I recapped the whole story. They checked all the older street maps that they had and could not tell me why someone put up "Iverson Street" street signs. We all agreed that it would cost a bunch of money to change them and that it was unlikely that it would ever be done. Finally, I wondered aloud if someone had just made a mistake and they agreed that was a possibility.

Mr. Bloom queried Harold Colby (former street division manager) and he recalled that at one point in the 70's the businesses on the western end of Iverson asked that it be changed from "Street to Avenue" to make it more appealing. I believe Mr. Colby may have the story correct but the order reversed as the city definitely changed it to Avenue in 1928.

Here are images which show that the city still called it Iverson Ave through 1985:

These three images are from the official city map of 1947 showing it as Iverson Ave. I could not place the entire avenue in a readable form in one image. So the two on the left are separate portions of the same map. One can clearly see though that Iverson was "Ave" as it ran past the U.W. Campus.

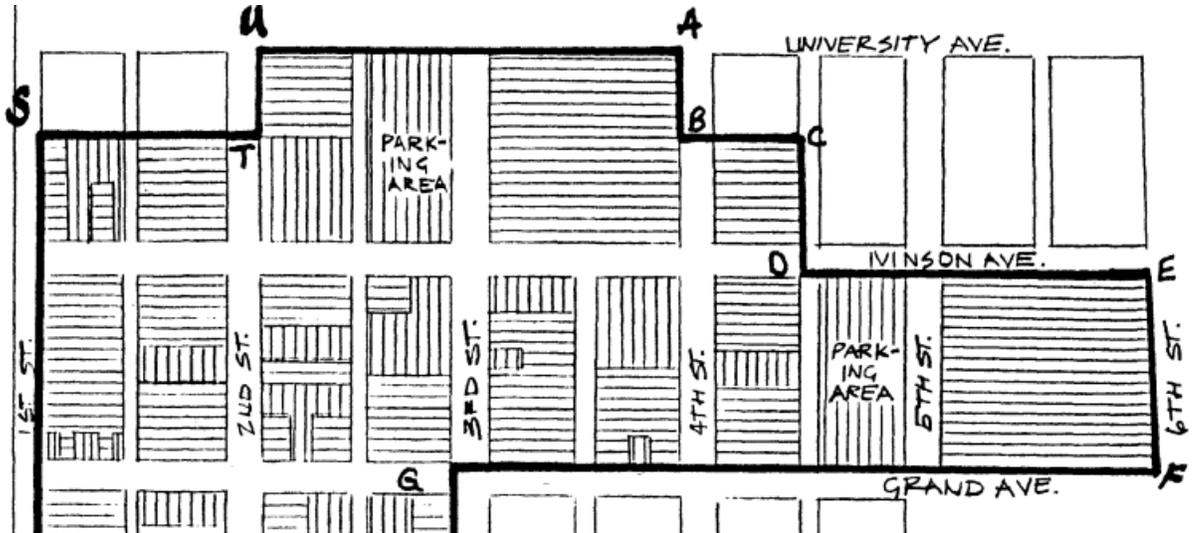


The image below was included for the 1988 submission for the Laramie Historic Downtown District. This photo was taken in 1985. So, here is another clue that the name was never officially changed to Iverson Street. Of note, is that the submission called it either Avenue or Street in different parts of the document.



Finally a couple of other facts: the U.S. Postal Service calls the lane in question, "Iverson Street." On the other hand, the letters stamped into the concrete of the curb and gutter along the street say "AVE" not street. I am not sure when those were installed, but I do know that the ones by our house (corner 12th and Steele) were done before 1954. Additionally, a hand drawn map of downtown Laramie

by "Cash" Carroll done in 1949 (he was a property appraiser and real estate agent) and held in the Laramie Plains Museum's collection lists it as Ivenson (sic) Avenue. Finally, the National Register of Historic Places 1988 submission (approved 11/10/88) for the Laramie Downtown Historic District also has a map that shows the street as "Iverson Ave."



Taken in aggregate, I am very confident that the street in question should still be officially Ivinson Avenue.

Kim Viner

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